

WOLF ANNUAL SURVEY AND INVENTORY PERFORMANCE REPORT

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: W-27-4

PROJECT NR.: 14.0

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT LOCATIONS: Game Management Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5

PROJECT TITLE: The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations

PERIOD: 1 July 2000–30 June 2001

The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region I

Regionwide Activities

Write an annual survey and inventory performance report. This draft satisfies the activity as described.

Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management. During fall 2000 Region I staff provided information to the Board on wolf population and harvest trends. The Board liberalized the harvest guideline level for wolves in Unit 2.

Seal harvested wolf pelts that are presented for sealing. Area staff, other ADF&G staff, FWP troopers, and designated sealing agents sealed wolf pelts during the regulatory year. Over 200 wolf pelts were sealed in the region.

Obtain an age structure of the wolves harvested through examination of foreleg bones attached to pelts presented for sealing. Area staff aged leg bones from Region I wolves that were submitted for sealing. About 175 wolf leg bones were collected for aging.

Contact reliable observers to obtain general information about the status and trends of wolf populations, including use of the statewide trapper questionnaire. Region I area and assistant area biologists reviewed all available information relating to wolves and their harvests for regulatory year 2000.

Unit 2

Collect information on wolves presented for sealing, and solicit anecdotal information about wolf populations. Ketchikan area staff opportunistically collected information from trappers, hunters, and others about Unit 2 wolf populations.

Use data generated from an ongoing wolf research project in the area and standard population modeling techniques to estimate the pre-season number of wolves on Prince of Wales Island. Ketchikan area staff used leg bone ages, research data, and modeling to estimate Unit 2 wolf population parameters. This data was in turn used in preparation for and presentations to the fall 2000 Board of Game.

Calculate when 25% of the wolves have been harvested based on the in-season requirement to seal wolves within 30 days of taking. Ketchikan area staff tracked the winter 2001 wolf harvest. Analysis showed that it would not be necessary to close the season early to keep the harvest within the 25% harvest guideline level.

Regional Segment Period Project Costs: \$7.1

Submitted by:

Bruce Dinneford
Wildlife Biologist IV

The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region II

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Seal wolf pelts presented for sealing by trappers and hunters.

Activity 2: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

In Region 2, 562 wolves were taken during this reporting period

Activity 3: Prepare annual survey and inventory performance report.

Activity 4: Prepare a wolf management report.

The next draft wolf management report will be prepared during spring 2003.

Activity 5: Conduct systematic aerial transect surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Surveys were conducted in Units 11 and 13 during this reporting period.

Activity 6: Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management.

The Board of Game addressed wolf proposals for region 2 during it's spring 2001 meeting.

Activities by Unit

Unit 6

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Harvest results: 7 males, 4 females, 2 unknown, 13 total.

Units 7 and 15

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Harvest for 2000/01: Total harvest - 62

Unit 7 – 18, Subunit 15A – 12, Subunit 15B – 6 Subunit 15C - 26

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

All pelts examined during this reporting period were infested with *Trichodectes canis*.
Pelt damage varied from extreme, generally on pups, to mild on adults.

Units 9 and 10

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

The preliminary wolf harvest for 2000/01 was 24 in Unit 9 and 2 from Unimak Island.
A mild winter with little snow reduced trapping effort.

Units 11 and 13

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

The preliminary 2000/01 harvest was:

GMU 13	265 wolves
GMU 11	33 wolves

Activity 2: Conduct surveys to estimate wolf population densities, pack sizes and distribution.

Estimates:		
GMU 13	550 wolves	60 packs
GMU 11	100 wolves	12 packs

Unit 14

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Wolf Harvest: 20

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There was no sign of lice on any of the pelts sealed this season from Unit 14.

Unit 16

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Wolf Harvest: 60

Activity 2: Examine pelts presented for sealing for the presence of louse infestation.

There was no sign of lice on any of the pelts sealed this season from Unit 16.

Unit 17

Activity 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through field observations, fur sealing reports, trapper questionnaires, and contact with trappers and hunters.

Results: 83 wolves reported harvested

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

None.

Segment Period Project Costs:

Fiscal year	Region			Total
	II	III	V	
2000–2001				
Planned	28.6			
Actual	25.6			

Submitted by:

Michael G McDonald

Assistant Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Wolf and Factors Influencing Their Populations in Region III

Regionwide Activities

Activity 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

We completed annual performance reports for all units.

Activity 2: Provide information to the Board of Game during the regulatory process.

We provided information to the Board of Game concerning Units 19 and 20 at a special meeting in May 2001.

Activities by Unit

Unit 12

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored harvest using sealing documents. Twenty-one trappers reported taking 52 wolves.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys in portions of the unit.

In conjunction with Yukon Department Renewable Resources, we conducted a wolf survey within the Chisana caribou herd's range, finding 10 packs and 36 wolves that reside primarily in the Alaskan portion of the herd's range.

We radiocollared 6 wolves to maintain contact with 2 study packs in Unit 12.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

We reviewed management objectives using input from advisory committees. No changes were necessary to meet biological or public needs or to comply with the Unit 12 intensive management objectives.

Units 19, 21A, and 21E

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored harvest of wolves, interviewed trappers and sealed pelts. Sealing forms indicate a harvest of 70 wolves.

We purchased 22 wolf carcasses from wolves taken in a portion of subunit 19D (East).

Activity 2: Conduct a population estimate survey in 19D (east).

We conducted a population estimate in a portion of subunit 19D east and observed evidence of 103 distinct wolves in the area during the survey

Units 20A, 20B, 20C, 20F, and 25C

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored the harvest of wolves (RY 2000, Unit 20, preliminary reports = 176 wolves) through trapper interviews and pelt sealing.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys during winter in selected areas to estimate the wolf population.

We conducted aerial surveys during spring to estimate pack sizes on eastern Tanana Flats portion of Unit 20A (est. 10-14 wolves in 2 packs).

Unit 20D

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

Aerial wolf surveys were flown in portions of Unit 20D for 13.5 hours. Wolf survey data will be combined with trapper and hunter observations to calculate a population estimate.

Activity 2: Conduct an estimation survey in a portion of the unit.

Preliminary harvest of wolves based on analysis of sealing certificates totaled 38 wolves plus 1 wolf was killed in defense of life and property.

Unit 20E

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored harvest using sealing documents, trapper questionnaires, and in field contact with trappers. Twelve trappers/hunters reported taking 50 wolves.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys to monitor population status and trend.

We conducted aerial surveys in areas where wolf pack sizes were unknown. We found 6 new packs ranging from 2-11 wolves.

Activity 3: Continue monitoring radio-collared wolves to determine range use, natality and mortality.

We continue monitoring radiocollared wolves to determine range use, natality and mortality.

We monitored movements, kill rates, and productivity of relocated and resident wolves.

We monitored wolf numbers within the nonlethal wolf control area using track surveys (October-April) and radiotelemetry.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

We reviewed wolf management activities with the advisory committees and Alaska Board of Game. No changes were deemed necessary to meet biological or public needs or to comply with the intensive management law.

Units 21B, 21C, 21D

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored harvest and estimated a take of 137 wolves using trapper interviews and fur sealing documents.

In combination with Unit 24, we mailed trapper questionnaires to 94 trappers and conducted informal interviews with 27 trappers.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial survey in conjunction with USFWS.

In conjunction with the USFWS, we counted 47 wolves/wolf tracks and estimated 11 packs during spring aerial reconnaissance surveys in Unit 21B.

We estimated a population of 413-607 wolves for the 20,655mi² area (20.0-29.4 wolves/1000mi²).

Unit 24

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We monitored harvest and estimated a take of 69 wolves using trapper interviews and fur sealing documents.

In combination with Units 21B, C and D, we mailed trapper questionnaires to 94 trappers and conducted informal interviews with 27 trappers.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys in conjunction with the USFWS.

We estimated a population of 374-541 wolves for the 26,055mi² area (14.4-20.8 wolves/1,000mi²)

Units 25A, 25B, 25D, 26B, and 26C

Activity 1: Monitor the harvest of wolves, interview trappers and seal all pelts brought in for sealing.

We compiled harvest data, interviewed trappers and sealed 69 wolf pelts.

Activity 2: Conduct aerial surveys during winter in selected areas to estimate the wolf population.

We completed a wolf population survey in Units 25D and 25B during April 1-April 3, 2001 in a 16,600 mi² area in parts of Units 25A, B, C and D. A total of 98 wolves (34 black and 64 gray) were observed and an estimated 181-204 wolves in 44 groups were identified.

Segment Period Costs:

<i>Expenditure</i>	Personnel months	Personnel costs	Operating costs	<i>Total</i>
<i>Planned</i>	9.0	52.2	28.0	80.2
<i>Actual</i>	13.4	86.4	52.7	139.1
<i>Difference</i>	-4.4	-34.2	-24.7	-58.9

Explanation:

Actual cost for both personnel and operating exceeded planned cost because of additional wolf surveys conducted in Unit 19D as part of moose predation studies.

Submitted by:

Roy A. Nowlin
Management Coordinator

The Status of Alaska Wolves and Factors Influencing their Population Status in Region V

Regionwide Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Write an annual survey and inventory performance report.

Performance report for Units 18, 22, 23, and 26A were prepared August 2001 and submitted to HQ early September 2001.

ACTIVITY 2: Provide information to the Board of Game on wolf management.

None.

ACTIVITY 3: Maintain the wolf sealing program in all units to monitor the hunter/trapper harvest.

Unit 18. When alerted to the need, we recruited sealers in the villages through letters and telephone contacts. We responded to requests for supplies and answered sealer questions.

Unit 22. The Nome office supplied sealing agents with fur seals and sealing certificates, answered procedural questions, trained a new fur sealing agent in Brevig, and processed fur sealing certificates for payment.

Unit 23. Wolves taken in Unit 23 were sealed by ADF&G and DPS staff.

Unit 26A. We sealed wolves and examined sealing reports from Unit 26A and found that 26 wolves were sealed in 2000-2001. Sealing certificates indicated that 23 of these were males and 3 were females. Ten of the trappers were local residents and 2 were nonresidents, and they reported that 25 wolves were ground shot and 1 was trapped. Two wolves were harvested using aircraft for transportation, 22 using snowmachine, and 2 using skis. Twenty of the wolves that were harvested were gray, 5 were black, and 1 was white.

ACTIVITY 4: Send out an annual trapper questionnaire to obtain harvest and population assessment information.

Unit 18. We sent out questionnaires to trappers and received 45 responses. Trappers consistently stated that wolf populations are larger than in previous years, and are increasing. Wolf harvest as determined by sealing records over the past few years are consistent with that impression.

Unit 22. A summary of furbearer harvest and abundance in Unit 22 was written for the Trapper Questionnaire annual report. A list of active Unit 22 furbearer hunter/trappers was compiled, a cover letter was written and trapper questionnaires were sent from the Juneau office.

Unit 23. The statewide trapper questionnaire was sent to trappers in Unit 23. Results were reported in the annual report (organized by region rather than Game Management Unit).

Unit 26A. We attached a letter explaining the state trapper questionnaire and sent it to several trappers in Unit 26A. We examined the results and read the comments from the trappers.

ACTIVITY 5: Develop updated population objectives in cooperation with the public and other agencies.

Unit 18. No work toward this objective was completed during this reporting period.

Unit 22. We are not engaged in a wolf planning process. Regulations currently maximize opportunity for wolf hunting and there have been no biological or social reasons to change our management strategy.

Unit 23. Population objectives were not discussed for wolves in Unit 23.

Unit 26A. We discussed desired population objectives for wolves in Unit 26A with members of the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee and they indicated that they were satisfied with the current population.

ACTIVITY 6: Improve compliance with current sealing requirements through public communication and education.

Unit 18. We continue to contribute articles to one of the local newspapers and include occasional articles dealing with wolves. At the start of trapping season, we sent posters to the area post offices explaining sealing requirements. We regularly receive phone calls from the public and answer questions during public meetings regarding wolves.

Unit 22. The reason for and importance of harvest reporting was explained at public meetings.

Unit 23. Department of Public Safety staff traveled to villages in Unit 23 to seal wolves and inform residents of sealing requirements.

Unit 26A. We made Public Service Announcements on the radio, and told many people personally, that everyone was required by law to have their furs sealed, and that tanneries wouldn't accept furs that were not sealed.

Unit 22

ACTIVITY 1: Monitor the wolf harvest through the fur sealing program, annual hunter/trapper questionnaires and big game harvest surveys conducted annually in selected villages.

Unit 22 sealing records show a harvest of 56 wolves: 24 from Unit 22A, 24 from Unit 22B, 2 from Unit 22C, 5 from Unit 22D and 1 from Unit 22E. Big game harvest surveys in Teller, Brevig, Shishmaref, and Wales show an additional 4 wolves were taken in Unit 22D.

ACTIVITY 2: Assess population status and trends utilizing sealing records, hunter/trapper interviews and questionnaires, village harvest surveys and observations by staff and the public.

Wolf densities were highest in Units 22A and eastern 22B, but harvest data and observations by staff and local residents indicate wolves were becoming more numerous in all parts of the unit. The increase was probably due to the large number of Western Arctic Herd caribou that wintered on the Seward Peninsula during the last five years. Trapper surveys from Units 22A and 22B reported that wolves were common. In 22A numbers were generally thought to be stable, while in Unit 22B wolves were generally thought to be increasing. Respondents from the remainder of the unit reported that wolves were scarce, but most respondents thought numbers were increasing. A pack of 12 wolves was reported in the American and Igiapuk drainages in Unit 22D during mid winter. Hunters and herders who routinely use that area had not seen such a large pack there before.

ACTIVITY 3: Cooperate with reindeer herders to evaluate methods for reducing adverse interactions between wolves and reindeer.

Nome staff participated in 3 Reindeer Herder Association meetings and addressed the herders concerns about wildlife issues, but wolves were not brought up for discussion.

Units 23 and 26A

ACTIVITY 1: Conduct aerial surveys in selected portions of Units 23 and 26A during late winter to assess population status.

Unit 23. No aerial surveys were conducted for wolves in Unit 23.

Unit 26A. We did not conduct an aerial survey for wolves during 2000-2001. The next wolf count is scheduled for the spring of 2003.

ACTIVITY 2: Record wolf sightings during moose censuses in Unit 26A as an indicator of wolf population trends.

Unit 26A. We did not spot any wolves during moose counts in 2000-2001.

Other activities funded by Federal Aid on this project:

None.

Statewide Segment Period Project Costs:

Fiscal year		Statewide			
2000-2001	I	II	III	V	Total
Actual	7.1	28.6	139.1	.8	175.6

Submitted by:

Statewide Costs: \$175, 600

Peter Bente
Wildlife Biologist III

